

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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R 231403Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5476

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 2464

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT SS SP AG MO

SUBJ: SPANISH SAHARA: CONVERSATION WITH ISTIQLAL SECRETARY
GENERAL

1. SUMMARY: ISTIQLAL SECRETARY GENERAL, WHO HAS BEEN IN MADRID RECENTLY AT KING'S INSTIGATION TO DISCUSS SPANISH SAHARA, PROFESSES TO DETECT EVOLUTION FAVORABLE TO MOROCCO IN SPANISH ATTITUDE TOWARD SAHARA PROBLEM AND A FEELING IN MADRID THAT ALGERIANS HAVE OVER-PLAYED THEIR HAND. HE INDICATES THAT FONMIN CORTINA, WITH WHO HE HAD COURTEOUS DISCUSSIONS, SHARES THESE SENTIMENTS. ISTIQLAL, HE SAYS, WILL NOT MAKE TROUBLE IF GOM SHOULD FIND IT TACTICALLY DESIRABLE TO DOWNPLAY ENCLAVES ISSUE. HE ADDS THAT PRESIDENT FORD'S VISIT TO MADRID MIGHT PROVIDE OCCASION TO GIVE EVOLUTION IN SPANISH THINKING A NUDGE. BOUCETTA SAYS HE WILL PROBABLY RETURN TO MADRID AND INDICATES THAT IT WAS SPANISH WHO INVITED HIM TO DO SO. WHILE BOUCETTA'S VIEWS LIKELY TO BE COLORED BY WISHFUL THINKING, CONTINUATION OF CONTACT IS ALL TO GOOD WITH TEMPERS ON BOTH SIDES OF STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR MOUNTING. END SUMMARY.

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2. ON MAY 20 I HAD LONG, PRIVATE CONVERSATION OVER DINNER

AT MY HOME WITH ISTIQLAL SECRETARY GENERAL BOUCETTA, WHO, AT KING'S INITIATIVE, HAS BEEN IN FREQUENT CONTACT WITH SPANISH GOVERNMENT ON SPANISH SAHARA QUESTION. BOUCETTA, WHO RETURNED FROM LATEST OF SERIES OF TRIPS TO MADRID EARLIER THIS MONTH, HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS A SPOKESMAN BOTH BECAUSE OF HIS GOOD CONTACTS WITH SPANISH AND BECAUSE OF KING'S WISH TO SHOW THAT POLITICAL PARTIES SHARE GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDES ON SAHARA.

3. BOUCETTA NOTED THAT NEGOTIATIONS WERE CERTAINLY MOVING SLOWLY BUT THAT, DURING MOST RECENT TRIP, HE HAD FOUND FONMIN CORTINA'S ATTITUDE TO HAVE EVOLVED CONSIDERABLY FROM TOTAL NEGATIVISM, RIGIDITY AND STANDOFFISHNESS CORTINA HAD SHOWN DURING LAST FALL'S UNGA. CORTINA, BOUCETTA SAID, SHOWS SIGNS THAT HE MIGHT BECOME EVEN MORE FLEXIBLE IN FUTURE. FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM IN SPANISH POSITION IS EXAGGERATION OF ALGERIAN IMPORTANCE, BOTH TO MADRID'S INTERESTS IN REGION AND TO ACHIEVING SAHARA SOLUTION, AND SPANISH CONTINUE TO INSIST ON ALGERIAN PARTICIPATION IN NEGOTIATING PROCESS. SUCH PARTICIPATION, BOUCETTA EMPHASIZED, AUTOMATICALLY BLOCKS AGREEMENT. EVEN WITH RESPECT TO ALGERIANS, HOWEVER, BOUCETTA PROFESSED TO HAVE SEEN RECOGNITION BY MANY IN SPAIN THAT ALGERIA HAD OVERPLAYED ITS HAND. THIS, IN BOUCETTA'S VIEW, HAD CAUSED SPANISH OPINION TO SHIFT SOMEWHAT IN MOROCCO'S FAVOR. BOUCETTA IMPLIED, BUT DID NOT SAY SO DIRECTLY, THAT CORTINA SHARED THIS DISENCHANTMENT.

4. BOUCETTA SAID THAT HE HAD CONCENTRATED ON CORTINA DURING HIS RECENT TRIP BECAUSE LATTER WAS HARDLINER PAR EXCELLENCE. SPANISH FRONT, BOUCETTA COMMENTED, WOULD HAVE TO BE CRACKED AT THIS POINT. BOUCETTA SPOKE OF CORTINA TOTALLY WITHOUT RANCOR AND GAVE ME IMPRESSION THAT TONE OF THEIR MEETINGS HAD BEEN UNIFORMLY COURTEOUS. CLEARLY, BOUCETTA IS WELL-DISPOSED PERSONALLY TOWARD SPANISH, WHO, HE COMMENTED, NEGOTIATE LIKE ARABS. AS AN ARAB, HE SAID, HE WAS THUS IN GOOD POSITION TO ASSESS PROGRESS OF NEGOTIATIONS.

5. I REMARKED THAT PRESS ESCALATION OF MOROCCAN-SPANISH CONFLICT, AND RAISING OF ENCLAVES ISSUE, HAD GIVEN ME CONCERN. AFTER JOKING ABOUT CONTORTIONS SPANISH WENT THROUGH TO EXPLAIN "DIFFERENCE" BETWEEN ENCLAVES AND GIBRALTER QUESTION, BOUCETTA NOTED THAT ISTIQLAL HAD LONG DEMANDED RETURN OF ENCLAVES AND CONFIDENTIAL

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COULD TBT#CHANGE ITS POSITION. NEVERTHELESS, SAHARA CAMPAIGN

HAD ABSOLUTE PRIORITY AT MOMENT AND SHOULD GOM FIND IT TACTICALLY DESIRABLE TO DOWNPLAY ENCLAVES QUESTION, ISTIQLAL WOULD NOT MAKE TROUBLE. ENCLAVES QUESTION WOULD SOLVE ITSELF OVER YEARS AND AT MOMENT DID NOT CREATE SAME SORT OF PRESSURE AS SAHARA PROBLEM.

6. PRESIDENT FORD, BOUCETTA SAID, WAS GOING TO SPAIN AT EXACTLY RIGHT TIME. THERE IS NOW A CERTAIN FAVORABLE MOMENTUM, HE SAID, WHICH SHOULD BE NUDGED ALONG. AT SAME TIME, HE CAUTIONED, DANGEROUS TENDENCY TO SATISFY IRRATIONAL AND BOUNDLESS AMBITIONS OF ALGERIA CREATED REAL DANGER THAT DISSERVICE COULD BE DONE TO INTERESTS OF U.S., MOROCCO AND SPAIN.

7. BOUCETTA SAID HE HAD BEEN ASKED TO RETURN TO SPAIN AND WOULD PROBABLY DO SO. IMPLICATION WAS THAT SPANISH HAD INVITED HIM BACK.

8. COMMENT: BOUCETTA IS SHREWD, TOUGH-MINDED AND PRACTICAL MAN BUT, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF EMBASSY MADRID'S REPORTING, I SENSED ELEMENT OF WISHFUL THINKING IN HIS ATTITUDE. IT MAY BE THAT HE HAS CONFUSED, OR WISHES TO CONFUSE, CORTINA'S COURTESY WITH DEVELOPMENT OF MORE FAVORABLE ATTITUDE TOWARDS MOROCCAN POSITION. STILL, CONTINUATION OF CONTACT APPEARS ALL TO THE GOOD WITH TEMPERS ON BOTH SIDES OF STRAIT MOUNTING.
NEUMANN

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED.

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